

**RULES  
OF  
TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF DENTISTRY**

**CHAPTER 0460-4  
RULES GOVERNING THE PRACTICE OF DENTAL ASSISTANTS**

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**0460-4-.01 LEVELS OF PRACTICE.** It is the intent of the Board to authorize two distinct levels of practice for dental assistants in dental offices in Tennessee.

(1) Practical Dental Assistants

- (a) Definition - A practical dental assistant is an auxiliary employee of a licensed dentist(s) who is receiving practical chair side dental assisting training from a licensed dentist(s) or is a dental assistant student in an educational institution accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association.
- (b) Scope of Practice
  - 1. A practical dental assistant must be under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist.
  - 2. It is the intent of this rule that practical dental assistants not invade the practice procedures allowed to be assigned or delegated to registered dental assistants or licensed dental hygienists except as to concurrently performed noninvasive supportive chairside procedures.

(2) Registered Dental Assistant

- (a) Definition - A dental assistant who has received a registration from the Board pursuant to rule 0460-4-.02.
- (b) Scope of Practice - A registered dental assistant may perform those procedures provided by rule 0460-4-.08 under the direct supervision of a dentist.

- (3) Practical dental assistants actively enrolled in a Board approved program or a program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association may concurrently be allowed to perform procedures under the direct supervision of a dentist, otherwise lawfully permitted to be performed by registered dental assistants under the direct supervision of a dentist, for the purpose of obtaining the clinical experience necessary to complete such program. Under no circumstance shall these procedures be permitted to be performed by practical dental assistants, except as concurrently performed noninvasive supportive chairside procedures, before entering an approved or accredited program or after completion of such program, until such individuals have successfully completed all sections of the Board's examination and have applied for registration.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-5-105, 63-5-105(4), 63-5-105(7), 63-5-108(c), 63-5-115, 63-5-116, 63-5-117, and 63-5-124. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. Repeal and new rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992.

(Rule 0460-4-.01, continued)

*Amendment filed June 29, 1994; effective September 12, 1994. Amendment filed October 9, 1997; effective December 23, 1997. Amendment filed February 9, 2000; effective April 24, 2000.*

**0460-4.02 REGISTRATION PROCESS.** To practice as a dental assistant beyond the scope of a practical dental assistant a person must possess a lawfully issued registration from the Board. The process for obtaining a registration is as follows:

- (1) An applicant shall obtain a Board application form from the Board Administrative Office, respond truthfully and completely to every question or request for information contained in the form and submit it along with all documentation and fees required by the form and this rule to the Board Administrative Office. It is the intent of this rule that all activities necessary to accomplish the filing of the required documentation be completed prior to filing a registration application and that all documentation be filed simultaneously.
- (2) An applicant shall submit:
  - (a) proof of having graduated from a high school or submit proof of possession of a general educational development (g.e.d.) certificate; and
  - (b) proof of having attained at least eighteen (18) years of age; and
  - (c) a signed "passport" style photograph taken within the preceding twelve (12) months.
- (3) An applicant shall submit evidence of good moral character. Such evidence shall include at least two (2) letters attesting to the applicant's character from dental professionals on the signator's letterhead.
- (4) An applicant shall submit proof of United States or Canadian citizenship or evidence of being legally entitled to live in the United States. Such evidence may include copies of birth certificates, naturalization papers, or current visa status.
- (5) An applicant shall submit the registration application fee and state regulatory fee provided in rule 0460-1-.02 (3).
- (6) An applicant shall disclose the circumstances surrounding any of the following:
  - (a) Conviction of any criminal law violation of any country, state, or municipality, except minor traffic violations.
  - (b) The denial of registration application by any other state or the discipline of registration in any state.
  - (c) Failure of any professional licensure examinations.
- (7) If an applicant has ever held a registration of any kind to practice dental assistance in any other state or Canada, the applicant shall submit or cause to be submitted the equivalent of the Tennessee Certificate of Endorsement from each such licensing board which indicates the applicant either holds a current active registration which is in good standing, or holds a registration which is currently inactive and whether it was in good standing at the time it became inactive.
- (8) An applicant must submit or cause to be submitted, documentation necessary to meet one of the following criteria:
  - (a) Certified Dental Assistant - Documentation sufficient to substantiate compliance with all prerequisites of a certified dental assistant as defined in rule 0460-1-.01; or

(Rule 0460-4-.02, continued)

(b) Out-of-State and Foreign Applicants

1. Dental assistants who are registered, licensed, or certified by another state:
  - (i) Documentation of registration, or its equivalent, as a dental assistant in another state as required by Rule 0460-4-.02(7); and
  - (ii) Official transcript from the dental assisting school, evidencing a minimum of one hundred and sixteen (116) clock hours of lecture and didactic training which shall have included a minimum of twenty-four (24) clock hours of radiological instruction.
2. Dental assistants who are not required to be registered, licensed or certified by another state:
  - (i) Official transcript from the dental assisting school, evidencing a minimum of one hundred and sixteen (116) clock hours of lecture and didactic training in subject areas which are equivalent to or exceeding the requirements of the Board-approved training course and which shall have included a minimum of twenty-four (24) clock hours of radiological instruction; and
  - (ii) Verification of employment as a dental assistant in another state. Verification shall be made by the employing dentist on official letterhead stationery bearing an original signature and shall be submitted by the employing dentist directly to the Board's administrative office.
3. Dental assistants or other dental professionals from another province, territory, or country:
  - (i) Official transcript from the dental assisting, dental hygiene, or dental school, evidencing a minimum of one hundred and sixteen (116) clock hours of lecture and didactic training in subject areas which are equivalent to or exceeding the requirements of the Board-approved training course and which shall have included a minimum of twenty-four (24) clock hours of radiological instruction; and
  - (ii) Verification of employment and/or verification of licensure, registration or certification as a dental assistant or dental professional in a province, territory or country. Verification shall be made by the employing dentist on official letterhead stationery bearing an original signature and shall be submitted by the employing dentist directly to the Board's administrative office; and
  - (iii) The board or agency that issued the license or certificate shall submit verification of licensure, registration or certification.
  - (iv) All documentation shall be translated into English and certified by the translator as an authentic translation of the referenced document.
4. If the applicant's file is not complete within ninety (90) days of submitting the application, the application file shall be closed and the applicant notified. No further Board action will take place until a new application is received, including another payment of all fees.
5. An applicant must become registered in Tennessee within one (1) year of submitting the application and must submit proof of successfully completing all examinations as

(Rule 0460-4-.02, continued)

provided in rule 0460-04-.03 or the application file shall be closed and the applicant notified. No further Board action will take place until a new application is received, including another payment of all fees and successful completion of a dental assisting program in Tennessee.

(c) Trained Dental Assistants in Tennessee

1. Certification of successful completion of one of the following:

- (i) Successful completion of a Board approved, local dental organization training program. At least two (2) months of training as a practical dental assistant as defined in rule 0460-4-.01 is required prior to admission to the training program; or
- (ii) Successful completion of a dental assisting program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association.

2. Certification of successful completion of all the examinations as provided in rule 0460-4-.03.

3. Within ninety (90) days of course completion, the applicant shall file the application and all necessary documentation and fees with the Board's Office, or the application file will be closed. Thereafter, the applicant must file a new application and documentation together with fees. The applicant must apply for and successfully become registered by the Board within one (1) year from course completion, or the educational course must be repeated. Failure to successfully apply within ninety (90) days of course completion, or anytime thereafter, shall in no way extend the original one (1) year from the date of course completion for the applicant to become registered.

(9) Application review and registration decisions required by this rule shall be governed by rule 0460-1-.04, notwithstanding the ninety (90) day completion periods provided in paragraph (8) of this rule.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-5-105, 63-5-108, 63-5-111, and 63-5-115. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. New rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed June 29, 1994; effective September 12, 1994. Amendment filed December 5, 1994; effective February 18, 1995. Amendment filed May 15, 1996; effective September 27, 1996. Amendment filed February 9, 2000; effective April 24, 2000. Amendment filed March 14, 2001; effective May 28, 2001. Amendment filed April 10, 2002; effective June 24, 2002.

**0460-4-.03 EXAMINATION.** The registration examinations when required by rules contained in this chapter are governed by the following:

- (1) An applicant must complete and submit a Board provided examination application form to the Board Administrative Office to take the registration examination.
- (2) An applicant taking the dental assistant registration examination must submit the examination processing fee provided in rule 0460-1-.02 (3).
- (3) The scope, format and content of the dental assistant registration examination shall be determined by either the Board or Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. (DANB) or another meaningfully credentialed testing agency designated in advance by the Board. Such testing agency shall also administer and grade the examination. The Board of Dentistry hereby adopts the passing grade on the dental assistant registration examination as determined by the testing agency and shall authorize the notification of the applicants regarding the examination results.

(Rule 0460-4-.03, continued)

- (4) Applicants who fail either of the examinations may apply for reexamination. Applicants to retake the registration examination must submit another examination fee as provided in rule 0460-01-.02 (3).
- (5) Any application review and decisions required by this rule shall be governed by rule 0460-1-.04.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-5-105, 63-5-111, and 63-5-115. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. New rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed March 20, 1996; effective June 3, 1996. Amendment filed May 15, 1996; effective September 27, 1996. Amendment filed April 10, 2002; effective June 24, 2002.

**0460-4-.04 CORONAL POLISHING CERTIFICATION.** Dental assistants, who pursuant to this rule and T.C.A. §63-5-108(c), receive certification to perform coronal polishing may do so under the restrictions contained in this rule.

- (1) Definition - Coronal polishing shall mean the polishing of the enamel and restorations on the anatomical crown of human teeth by utilizing only a combination of a polishing agent, a slow speed hand piece, a prophyl angle, and a rubber cup.
- (2) Qualifications - To be considered for issuance of a coronal polishing certification, an applicant must have been a Tennessee registered dental assistant as defined in Rule 0460-4-.01 for a period of at least one (1) year prior to entering the process. The sequence of the certification process is as follows:
  - (a) An applicant must apply to the Administrative Board Office for approval before applying for admission to an educational course in coronal polishing.
  - (b) An applicant must apply for and successfully complete an educational course, as provided in this rule, as a prerequisite for admission to the examination.
  - (c) Within thirty (30) days after successful completion of the educational course, an applicant must apply to be admitted to the examination as provided in this rule and submit proof of current certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
  - (d) After successful completion of the examination, an applicant will be awarded a coronal polishing certificate by the Board Administrative Office.
- (3) The Educational Course
  - (a) The fee for the educational course shall be that set by the educational institution providing the course. The fee is to be paid to the institution and not to the Board.
  - (b) The educational course must be approved by the Board and must consist of a minimum of fourteen (14) hours of study over at least a two (2) day period. The educational course must be taken in an educational institution such as a school of dentistry or dental hygiene and must be taught in its entirety by a licensed dentist or dental hygienist. The clinical instructor to applicant ratio must be one (1) instructor to six (6) applicants for the clinical portion of the course.
  - (c) Educational institutions must utilize the coronal polishing syllabus approved by The Board of Dentistry (a copy of which may be obtained from the Board Administrative Office) with the following changes in the lecture and lab hours required:
    - 1. A minimum of three (3) hours of lab on typodonts is required at the end of the first (1st) day's lectures; and

(Rule 0460-4-.04, continued)

2. A minimum of one (1) hour refresher lab on typodonts is required before the middle of the second (2nd) day of the course; and
  3. A clinical (hands on) polishing performed on other applicants in the course must consist of a minimum of three (3) hours in the afternoon of the last day.
- (d) An applicant shall not be admitted to the examination until the Board has received a written certification of successful completion of the coronal polishing educational course which must be submitted directly from the instructor of the course.
- (e) The instructor of the course may only certify successful completion of the course for applicants deemed capable of safely performing coronal polishing. The Board reserves the right to make an independent determination on the issue of successful completion.
- (4) The Examination
- (a) The clinical portion of the examination shall be administered by a member of the Board or the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. (DANB) or another meaningfully credentialed testing agency designated in advance by the Board and shall be conducted in an educational institution. The written portion of the examination can be administered by the testing agency, a Board member, or a Board representative. By adopting such examinations, the Board deems fulfilled the requirements set forth in *T.C.A. §63-5-108(c)* that the clinical and didactic examination be administered by the Board. The Board interprets “administered by the Board” to mean “adopted by the Board” for purposes of this section.
- (b) The examination shall be conducted as soon as is practicable after the conclusion of each educational course and shall be governed in format, content and subject matter by the testing agency. Applicants must provide a patient for the clinical portion of the examination.
- (c) The passing score for the written portion of the examination is seventy-five (75). The clinical portion of the exam shall be graded on a pass/fail basis by the testing agency.
- (d) An applicant must submit the examination fee as provided in Rule 0460-1-.02 (3) each time the applicant takes the examination.
- (e) An applicant who fails to successfully complete the examination after the third (3rd) attempt must begin the certification process over again.
- (f) An applicant must file a new application for each examination to be taken and submit a new examination fee as provided in Rule 0460-1-.02 (3).
- (5) Supervision
- (a) Any time a dental assistant is allowed to perform coronal polishing after receiving certification, the employer dentist must be physically on the office premises at all times during the polishing and must also:
1. Examine each patient immediately prior to the polishing to determine health, calculus and scalable stain free and to certify the need for coronal polishing; and
  2. Examine each patient immediately after the polishing is completed to evaluate the results.

(Rule 0460-4-.04, continued)

- (b) A dental assistant may not perform coronal polishing for patients who have not been examined immediately prior to being assigned for polishing.
- (6) Application review and decisions required by this rule shall be governed by Rule 0460-1-.04.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-3-1011, 4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-5-105, 63-5-108, 63-5-111, and 63-5-115. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. New rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed December 5, 1994; effective February 18, 1995. Amendment filed October 17, 1995; effective December 31, 1995. Amendment filed March 20, 1996; effective June 3, 1996. Amendment filed May 15, 1996; effective September 27, 1996. Amendment filed June 18, 2003; effective September 1, 2003.

**0460-4-.05 NITROUS OXIDE CERTIFICATION.** Dental assistants may not administer nitrous oxide to patients but may monitor nitrous oxide sedation (as defined in rule 0460-2-.07) upon becoming certified pursuant to the following process:

- (1) A dental assistant must be registered pursuant to rule 0460-4-.02.
- (2) A dental assistant must apply for and successfully complete a Board approved educational course in monitoring nitrous oxide; and
- (3) A dental assistant must cause to be submitted directly from the educational course sponsor to the Board Administrative Office a certification of successful completion of the course. If the course was completed during the educational process for obtaining registration, a separate certification is not necessary.
- (4) Upon notification from the Board that certification has been approved, a dental assistant may monitor nitrous oxide sedation for patients of the employer dentist in accordance with the definition of monitoring nitrous oxide and while being physically present in the operatory with the patient at all times.
- (5) Unless more than one patient receiving nitrous oxide is in an operatory, a dental assistant may not monitor nitrous oxide for more than one patient at a time.
- (6) Application review and decisions required by this rule shall be governed by rule 0460-1-.04.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-5-105, 63-5-105(3), 63-5-105(4), 63-5-105(7), 63-5-108, 63-5-108(b) through 63-5-108(d) and 63-5-115. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. Amendment filed October 13, 1983; effective November 14, 1983. Repeal and new rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed February 18, 2003; effective May 4, 2003.

**0460-4-.06 REGISTRATION RENEWAL.** All dental assistants issued registrations by the Board must renew those registrations to be able to legally continue in practice. Registration renewal is governed by the following:

- (1) Renewal application
  - (a) The due date for registration renewal is the last day of the month in which a registrant's birthday falls pursuant to the Division of Health Related Boards "birthdate renewal system" contained on the renewal certificate as the expiration date.
  - (b) Methods of Renewal

(Rule 0460-4-.06, continued)

1. Internet Renewals - Individuals may apply for renewal and pay the necessary fees via the Internet. The application to renew can be accessed at:  
  
[www.tennesseeanytime.org](http://www.tennesseeanytime.org)
2. Paper Renewals - For individuals who have not renewed their registration online via the Internet, a renewal application form will be mailed to each individual registered by the Board to the last address provided to the Board. Failure to receive such notification does not relieve the registrant from the responsibility of meeting all requirements for renewal.
- (c) A registration issued pursuant to these rules is renewable by the expiration date. To be eligible for renewal an individual must submit to the Division of Health Related Boards on or before the expiration date the following:
  1. A completed renewal application form.
  2. The renewal and state regulatory fees as provided in Rule 0460-1-.02.
- (d) Registrants who fail to comply with the renewal rules or notification received by them concerning failure to timely renew shall have their registrations processed pursuant to rule 1200-10-1-.10.
- (2) Reinstatement of an Expired Registration - Reinstatement of a registration that has expired may be accomplished upon meeting the following conditions:
  - (a) Payment of all past due renewal fees, state regulatory fees and the reinstatement fee as established in rule 0460-1-.02; and
  - (b) Provide documentation of successfully completing continuing education requirements for every year the registration was expired, pursuant to Rule 0460-1-.05; and
  - (c) Any registrant who fails to renew registration prior to the expiration of the second (2nd) year after which renewal is due may be required to meet other conditions as the Board may deem necessary to protect the public.
- (3) Anyone submitting a renewal form, reinstatement/reactivation application, or letter which is found to be untrue may be subject to disciplinary action as provided in T.C.A. § 63-5-124.
- (4) Renewal issuance decisions pursuant to this rule may be made administratively, upon review by the Board.
- (5) Application review and decisions required by this rule shall be governed by rule 0460-1-.04.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-1-107, 63-1-108, 63-5-105, 63-5-105(7), 63-5-107, 63-5-117, 63-5-124, and 63-5-129. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. New rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed February 12, 1996; effective April 27, 1996. Amendment filed April 10, 2001; effective June 24, 2001. Amendment filed August 21, 2002; effective November 4, 2002.

#### **0460-4.07 REGISTRATION RETIREMENT AND REACTIVATION.**

- (1) Registrants who wish to retain their registration but not actively practice may avoid compliance with the registration renewal process, continuing education and CPR requirements by doing the following:



(Rule 0460-4-.07, continued)

- (a) Obtain from, complete and submit to the Board Administrative Office an affidavit of retirement form.
  - (b) Submit any documentation which may be required by the form to the Board Administrative Office.
- (2) Any registrant whose registration has been retired may reenter active practice by doing the following:
  - (a) Submit a written request for reactivation to the Board Administrative Office; and
  - (b) Pay the registration renewal fee and state regulatory fee as provided in rule 0460-1-.02 (3). If retirement was pursuant to rule 0460-4-.06 (5) and reactivation was requested prior to the expiration of one (1) year from the date of retirement, the Board may require payment of the late renewal fee and past due renewal and state regulatory fees as provided in rule 0460-1-.02 (3).
  - (c) If requested, after review by the Board, a designated Board member, or the Board consultant, appear before the Board, a designated Board member, or the Board consultant, for an interview regarding continued competence in the event of retirement in excess of two (2) years.
- (3) Application review and decisions required by this rule shall be governed by rule 0460-1-.04.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 4-5-204, 63-5-105, 63-5-117, and 63-5-129. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal and new rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed March 20, 1996; effective June 3, 1996. Amendment filed August 21, 2002; effective November 4, 2002.

#### **0460-4.08 SCOPE OF PRACTICE.**

- (1) A lawfully licensed and duly registered dentist may delegate to registered dental assistants those procedures for which they have received adequate training and for which the dentist exercises direct supervision and full responsibility, except as follows:
  - (a) Those procedures which require professional judgment and skill of a dentist as defined in the Dental Practice Act or rules of the Board.
  - (b) Those clinical procedures which are primarily concerned with the practice of dental hygiene and which are allocated by the Dental Practice Act or Rules of Tennessee Board of Dentistry specifically and solely to licensed dental hygienists including those procedures listed in rule 0460-3-.09 (1) (b), (v), (w) and (x).
  - (c) Polishing only as provided by rule 0460-4-.04.
- (2) Dental assistants who perform procedures not delegable pursuant to this rule or procedures specifically prohibited by T.C.A. §63-5-108 or who perform procedures without the direct supervision of a dentist, or perform coronal polishing or nitrous oxide monitoring without certification are in violation of the rules governing those procedures, and may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to T.C.A. §63-5-116(b).

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202, 63-5-105, 63-5-108, 63-5-115 and 63-5-116. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Amendment filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. Repeal and new rule filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992. Amendment filed May 15, 1996; effective September 27, 1996.

#### **0460-4.09 REPEALED.**

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§4-5-202 and 63-5-105(7). **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Amendment filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980. Repeal filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992.

**0460-4-.10 THROUGH 0460-4-.12 REPEALED.**

*Authority:* T.C.A. §§4-5-202 and 63-5-105(7). *Administrative History:* Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed December 11, 1991; effective January 25, 1992.

**0460-4-.13 AND 0460-4-.14 REPEALED.**

*Authority:* T.C.A. §§4-5-202 and 63-5-105(7). *Administrative History:* Original rule certified June 7, 1974. Repeal filed August 26, 1980; effective December 1, 1980.